

the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the following nominations en bloc: Alexis Taylor, of Iowa, to be Under Secretary of Agriculture for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs; L. Michelle Moore, of Georgia, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2026; Robert P. Klein, of Tennessee, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2026; William J. Renick, of Mississippi, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2027; Adam Wade White, of Kentucky, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2027; Joe H. Ritch, of Alabama, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2025; and Beth Pritchard Geer, of Tennessee, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2026?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now resume legislative session.

AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2023—Continued

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, we are debating, discussing, and hopefully concluding our work on something called an Omnibus appropriations bill. I certainly decry the method by which the committee, the Senate, and the Congress work in regard to appropriations bills. I am a member of that Appropriations Committee, but there is no reason—none—that we could not do as we are supposed to do, as we are intending to do—12 separate appropriations bills, one at a time.

It is an opportunity for the committees to have hearings with witnesses to debate and discuss the content of that appropriations bill, pass it out of the committee, send it to the Senate, and let other Members of the Senate who are not on the Appropriations Com-

mittee amend, discuss, and debate that section of what today, tonight, this week becomes this large, all-encompassing bill.

We all would be better off if we broke this down into the 12 separate parts that are now combined into this one large bill. We would know much more about it, the deliberations would be more forthright, and we would have less likelihood of something being contained in the bill that there was objection to it being there.

I hope in the new Senate, the new Congress beginning in January, we as appropriators, we as Members of the Senate, work hard to go back to the way things were before I was ever in the Senate in which there is a budget, 12 appropriations bills, and then fill in the spaces on that budget. Then, ultimately, every Member of the U.S. Senate has input into the outcome.

I want to highlight something that is in the appropriations bill that we are discussing and considering at this point in time. Before I do that, I want to, again, indicate that one of the most important components to me in this legislation is the opportunity for us to more fully fund those who serve in our military and to better care for our veterans who have served.

There is some suggestion that we are rushing to complete this legislation before the new year. The reality is, we are—again, because of the process that we have failed to follow, we are behind in the system. It is not that we are advancing a bill that was something to take advantage of in the future. We are 3 months behind in passing an appropriations bill that was due at the end of the fiscal year September 30, 3 months ago.

And if we wait to pass an appropriations bill into the new year—we are supposed to have our appropriations process completed in March—we will just be beginning the discussion, debate about the old bill—the bill for this year—at a time in which we are supposed to be advancing the conversation, debate, and outcome of a bill to fund the new year.

And in the process of doing so, we will have left our military at flatline funding. And the challenges we face in this country are so significant that no additional dollars to the Department of Defense for even a short period of time—months, 6 weeks, 3 months, a year—that is very damaging, particularly in these days of significant defense inflation. And so it is important for us to complete our work in a timely fashion.

And, unfortunately for us, that timely fashion is already 3 months ago. In this bill, in a bipartisan fashion, we were successful in adding a number of provisions to the bill that advanced the cause of those who served our Nation. So my point, first of all, is for those men and women who serve in our military today, they deserve something different than old funding or no funding or continued funding at a flatline level.

And for our military men and women who have served in the past, our veterans, they deserve many of the provisions that are now included in the appropriations package.

Our military, as we know, is comprised of many selfless Americans who signed up, volunteered to serve. It is through their sacrifices, their family's sacrifices, that they have protected and preserved the gift of freedom that we have in this country and what we should always cherish.

In asking brave people to serve, men and women, generally young, we make, as a Nation, a promise to them and to their families that their government will assist them in successfully returning to civilian life after their service.

Specifically, I think we promise those who serve help for them in transitioning to civilian life through education, training, and economic assistance, to provide them medical care for their injuries or diseases incurred during their service, and to compensate them financially if those injuries prevent them from meeting their full earning potential.

As we consider the fiscal year 2023 appropriations package, there are a few specific veterans bills that have been included in this legislation to give the Department of Veterans Affairs the tools and resources they need to meet the changing needs of America's veterans.

One is the Joseph Maxwell Cleland and the Robert J. Dole Memorial Veterans Benefit Healthcare Improvement Act, long last name, honoring two previous Members of the U.S. Senate—including my successor in the seat I hold in the U.S. Senate, Senator Bob Dole.

He himself, not only a Kansan but a significantly wounded veteran and an individual who never stopped fighting for his fellow veterans, it is an honor to name this legislation with his respect in mind.

This legislation, described in that title, delivers new benefits and improved resources for the VA, including a specific bill that I introduced, one that is—we call in short words GHAPS, Guaranteeing Healthcare Access to Personnel Who Served. That act builds upon previous legislation and efforts to continue to lay a groundwork necessary to transform the VA into a modernized innovative healthcare system.

It includes protections to safeguard veterans' access to care from highly qualified providers in VA medical facilities and through the VA's Community Care Network to help veterans across the country, including those in rural—a significant component of my State and the Presiding Officer's—and remote communities, that those veterans get the care they need when they need it and where they want it.

It would also require the VA to establish a pilot program to empower veterans by letting them schedule their own appointments, just like they would be able to do if they were seeking care elsewhere.